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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#)

SUBJECT: NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT PROGRESS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary. Gaza PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa (Independent) told ConGen Poloff that PM-designate Ismayil Haniyah's goal of establishing the NUG by March 8 will be difficult to achieve. There is no agreement yet on the Deputy PM, Interior Minister or most other cabinet portfolios, she said, and several Fatah leaders and minor faction heads are jockeying to increase their positions. Ziad Abu Amr's appointment as Foreign Minister is a "done deal," she said, while acknowledging Abu Amr's potential problems as FM, since he is close to Hamas and will not represent President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen)'s political platform. PLC member Salam Fayyad told the Consul General that Haniyah considers him the presumptive NUG Finance Minister. Al-Shawwa said PLC member Mustafa Barghuthi is being discussed as Information Minister, and suggested Haniyah will offer her an unspecified portfolio. End summary.

Timeline for NUG Creation

¶12. (C) Gaza PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa, who discussed NUG formation with PM Haniyah on February 21, told Poloff that Haniyah's goal of establishing the NUG by March 8 (three weeks from President Abbas' designation) will be difficult to achieve. She said several Fatah PLC members and minor faction heads are delaying formation in the hopes of increasing their positions. (Note: While PIJ and the PFLP have publicly stated they will not join the NUG, the DFLP, FIDA, People's Party and several independents are negotiating with Hamas and Fatah leaders for ministerial portfolios. End note).

No Agreement on Deputy PM

¶13. (C) Al-Shawwa said there is no agreement on the Deputy PM position. She said Fatah will submit a name for this position and Haniyah will not be involved until Fatah decides on a prospective candidate. PLC member Muhammad Dahlan disavowed interest in the Deputy PM position in a statement issued to the press February 19. Arabic press still mention his name as a possible candidate, however, along with Fatah Central Committee (FCC) members Nabil Sha'ath, Nasser Yusif and Hakam Balawi, PLC Fatah block leader Azzam al-Ahmad, and former minister and PECDAR head Muhammad Shtayya.

Portfolio Assignments Incomplete

¶14. (C) Ziad Abu Amr's appointment as Foreign Minister is a "done deal," al-Shawwa said. She said Abu Amr would nonetheless be a problem in this role, given that he is close to Hamas and serves as an informal advisor to PM Haniyah, and

thus will not represent President Abbas' political platform. She said PLC member Mustafa Barghuthi is being discussed as the Information Minister, but there is no consensus on other ministries, and there is disagreement both inside Fatah and between factions on who should lead the Interior Ministry. Al-Shawwa was coy about her own prospects; she verified media reports that Haniyah offered her a portfolio, but said neither she nor Haniyah discussed a specific ministry.

¶5. (C) Former Finance Minister Salam Fayyad told the Consul General that he met with Haniyah on February 21. Fayyad said the discussion was primarily about policy and not about portfolios, but Haniyah conducted the discussion from the premise that Fayyad would be the NUG Finance Minister. Arabic press reported February 21 that Fayyad will take the position to support the Mecca agreement and Palestinian unity. Fayyad told the Consul General that these press reports were based on comments by Hamas sources.

No Fatah Retreat from Mecca

¶6. (SBU) In Palestinian media statements and interviews, Fatah leaders have maintained public support for the Mecca agreement. The FCC issued a statement February 20 praising the Mecca agreement, calling for its rapid implementation and rejecting international criticism. Arabic newspapers have quoted Fatah PLC leaders Azzam al-Ahmad and Muhammad Dahlan and PLO Negotiations Chief Sa'eb Erekat making similar comments.

WALLES